

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claim 1 as follows, cancel claims 2-21 without prejudice and add new claims 22-40:

1. (Amended) An aqueous sol containing silica-based particles, which sol has:

- (i) an S-value within the range of from 10 to 45%;
- (ii) a viscosity within the range of from 5 to 40 cP; and
- (iii) a molar ratio of  $\text{SiO}_2$  to  $\text{M}_2\text{O}$ , where M is alkali metal or ammonium, within the range of from 10:1 to 40:1; and
- (iv) the silica-based particles have a specific surface area within the range of from 550 to 725  $\text{m}^2/\text{g}$ .

22. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 1, wherein the S-value is within the range of from 20 to 40%.

A<sub>3</sub> 23. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 1, wherein the sol has a molar ratio of  $\text{SiO}_2$  to  $\text{M}_2\text{O}$ , where M is alkali metal or ammonium, within the range of from 15:1 to 30:1.

24. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 1, wherein the sol has pH of at least 10.6.

25. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 1, wherein the sol has a viscosity within the range of from 7 to 25 cP.

26. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 1, wherein the sol has a molar ratio of  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  to  $\text{SiO}_2$  within the range of from 1:4 to 1:1500.

27. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 1, wherein the sol has a molar ratio of B, where B is boron, to  $\text{SiO}_2$  within the range of from 1:4 to 1:1500.

28. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 1, wherein the sol has a molar ratio of Al to B, where B is boron, within the range of from 100:1 to 1:100.

29. (New) An aqueous sol containing silica-based particles, which sol has:

- (i) an S-value within the range of from 10 to 45%;
- (ii) a viscosity within the range of from 5 to 40 cP; and
- (iii) a silica content of at least 10% by weight; and
- (iv) the silica-based particles have a specific surface area within the range of from 550 to 725 m<sup>2</sup>/g.

30. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 29, wherein the S-value is within the range of from 20 to 40%.

31. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 29, wherein the sol has a pH of at least 10.6.

32. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 29, wherein the sol has a silica content within the range of from 12 to 20% by weight.

33. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 29, wherein the sol has a viscosity within the range of from 7 to 25 cP.

34. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 29, wherein the sol has a molar ratio of SiO<sub>2</sub> to M<sub>2</sub>O, where M is alkali metal or ammonium, within the range of from 10:1 to 40:1.

35. (New) An aqueous sol containing silica-based particles, which sol has:

- (i) an S-value within the range of from 10 to 45%;
- (ii) a viscosity within the range of from 7 to 25 cP;
- (iii) a silica content of at least 10% by weight;

(iv) a molar ratio of  $\text{SiO}_2$  to  $\text{M}_2\text{O}$ , where M is alkali metal or ammonium, within the range of from 10:1 to 40:1; and

(v) a pH of at least 10.6.

36. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 35, wherein the silica-based particles have a specific surface area of at least  $300\text{m}^2/\text{g}$  up to  $1050\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ .

*A<sub>3</sub>* 37. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 35, wherein the silica-based particles have a specific surface area within the range of from 775 to  $1050\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ .

38. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 35, wherein the silica-based particles have a specific surface area within the range of from 550 to  $725\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ .

39. (New) An aqueous sol containing silica-based particles, which sol has:

- (i) an S-value within the range of from 10 to 45%;
- (ii) a viscosity within the range of from 5 to 40 cP;
- (iii) a silica content of at least 10% by weight;
- (iv) a molar ratio of  $\text{SiO}_2$  to  $\text{M}_2\text{O}$ , where M being alkali metal or ammonium, within the range of from 10:1 to 40:1; and
- (v) the sol is modified by an aluminium-containing compound, a boron-containing compound or a mixture thereof.

40. (New) The aqueous sol according to claim 39, wherein the silica-based particles have a specific surface area of at least  $300\text{m}^2/\text{g}$  up to  $1050\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ .

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please add the following abstract on a separate page following the claims:

*A<sub>4</sub>* Abstract of the Disclosure

An aqueous sol containing silica-based particles which has an S-value within the range of from 10 to 45%, a viscosity within the range of from 5 to 40 cP, and a molar ratio of  $\text{SiO}_2$  to  $\text{M}_2\text{O}$ , where M is alkali metal or ammonium, within the range of from